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# The Right Reflection: Improving Women's Self-Acceptance

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# The Right Reflection: Improving Women's Self-Acceptance

## Abstract

This capstone is about women and self-acceptance. The title, *The Right Reflection*, alludes to the fact that none of us see ourselves directly, only through the reflections of others. Sometimes women's reflections are distorted due to destructive cultural messages that women receive and internalize and maladaptive thinking they then develop. Books as recent as *The Confidence Code* (Katy & Shipman, 2014) and concepts a bit older such as the Imposter Phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) point to the reality that women view themselves as less-qualified, intelligent and deserving than men or other women. This capstone explores the role of low self-acceptance in this phenomenon. Topics covered include the concept of self-acceptance, how self-acceptance differs from self-compassion and self-esteem, what contributes to low self-acceptance in women (sex-role stereotyping, patriarchy, sexism), thinking styles that contribute to low self-acceptance in women (rumination, perfectionism, explanatory style), how low self-acceptance manifests in women (imposter phenomenon, lack of confidence), and actions that women can take to improve self-acceptance. This capstone will conclude with strategies to help women improve their self-acceptance and alleviate the suffering associated with low self-acceptance.

## Keywords

self-acceptance, patriarchy, sexism, sex-role stereotyping, rumination, perfectionism, explanatory style, imposter phenomenon, confidence gap

## Disciplines

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The Right Reflection: Improving Women's Self-Acceptance

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University of Pennsylvania

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Judith Saltzberg Levick, Ph.D.

August 1, 2014

The Right Reflection: Improving Women's Self-Acceptance  
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This capstone is about women and self-acceptance. The title, *The Right Reflection*, alludes to the fact that none of us see ourselves directly, only through the reflections of others. Sometimes women's reflections are distorted due to destructive cultural messages that women receive and internalize and maladaptive thinking they then develop. Books as recent as *The Confidence Code* (Katy & Shipman, 2014) and concepts a bit older such as the Imposter Phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) point to the reality that women view themselves as less-qualified, intelligent and deserving than men or other women. This capstone explores the role of low self-acceptance in this phenomenon. Topics covered include the concept of self-acceptance, how self-acceptance differs from self-compassion and self-esteem, what contributes to low self-acceptance in women (sex-role stereotyping, patriarchy, sexism), thinking styles that contribute to low self-acceptance in women (rumination, perfectionism, explanatory style), how low self-acceptance manifests in women (imposter phenomenon, lack of confidence), and actions that women can take to improve self-acceptance. This capstone will conclude with strategies to help women improve their self-acceptance and alleviate the suffering associated with low self-acceptance.

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*The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely. — C.G. Jung*

Over my 30-year career in the insurance industry, I have often been the lone woman in the room. I am the only woman to have reached the executive level in my company's 125-year history. While I have banged my head on more than a few glass ceilings, a big roadblock has been my own self-limiting beliefs, and I do not think I am alone.

I come in contact with many successful women. I listen to their stories and there certainly is a common theme. Successful women over-compensate. They over-study, over-prepare, over-work in comparison with their male peers and then pretend it is no big deal. They are the proverbial duck in water where others don't see the furious paddling going on beneath the surface. They battle self-doubt; they see themselves in competition with other women; and they suffer guilt that they're not doing enough in any arena of their lives (Clance & Imes, 1978).

When I received my promotion to the C-suite, I received a card that featured a quotation attributed to Mahatmas Gandhi. It read: "First they ignore you; then they laugh at you; then they fight you; then you win." On the inside it read, "Congratulations, you've won." But what exactly did I win? When I show this card to women, it brings tears to their eyes. They have all been ignored, laughed at and attacked. And when they've "won" in their particular domain, the victory often seems hollow. I have friends in law, medicine, government, religion, academia, and business. Often they define "winning" as being in a position to be "authentic," and too often their chosen career path does not allow for that. So they've started their own law firms, set-up private medical practices, left government, and started their own businesses in order to be authentic and find the meaning and purpose that was unavailable in their affiliated institutions. If they don't leave physically, they leave emotionally and mentally and find their meaning and purpose outside of work. What a loss for their organizations.

I want to help women see themselves clearly, accept themselves non-judgmentally and determine what will give their lives meaning and purpose. I plan to do this work through workshops, blogs, speaking engagements, coaching, and whatever other means are appropriate. After reading many self-help books for women, I have found some common deficiencies in the material. Self-help books are often one person's experience, which the author then attempts to extrapolate to universal experience. These books are often not evidence-based and often address the symptoms women may be having but not the deeper issues. The tools, methods and insights of positive psychology can help.

### **Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology focuses on studying what makes life worth living (Seligman, 2012). For years, psychology focused on the disease model. The emphasis was on easing the mental sufferings of depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsiveness, eating disorders, schizophrenia etc. Just as the absence of physical disease does not ensure optimal physical well-being, the absence of mental disease does not ensure mental thriving. Positive psychology focuses on how to have optimum mental well-being.

During MAPP, we were introduced to the concept of well-being, often described as what people want, "the good life" (Seligman, 2012). We relied heavily on Aristotle's term -- *Eudaimonia*, which is translated as meaning more than just feeling happy. According to this view, each individual comes into life with unique capacities, known as one's "daimon." Eudaimonia is often contrasted with hedonism or pleasure. Aristotle felt it is not reasonable that people would live their whole lives just for hedonic pleasure. There is a higher good, and what separates humans from animals is that humans desire this higher good. The goal of life is



Eudaimonic happiness (well-being) through the exercise of our human capacities (Thomson & Tredennick, 1976).

There are many theoretical models of what constitutes well-being or Eudaimonic happiness. Seligman (2012) proposed one model, which includes positive emotions, engagement, meaningful relationships, meaning and achievement (PERMA). We read extensively about this model in MAPP, but we were also introduced to other models, one of which captured my interest. Carol Ryff (1989) proposed a model entitled, Psychological Well-Being (PWB), which includes self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. I returned to this model again and again throughout MAPP. The reason: the specific sub-scale of self-acceptance. Ryff (1989) describes the qualities of people who are high and low in self-acceptance:

**High scorer:** Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life.

**Low scorer:** Feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred in past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; wishes to be different than what he or she is. (Ryff, 1989, p. 1072).

To me the root of my problems with self-doubt, lack of self-confidence, spotty self-esteem all stemmed from the largest SELF of all: self-acceptance. And I became interested in exploring the effect of lack of self-acceptance on women's lives.

This capstone will serve as the literature review for the work I plan to do with women. It explores the concept of self-acceptance, what contributes to low self-acceptance in women, how low self-acceptance manifests in women, and actions that women can take to improve self-acceptance. The title of this capstone is *The Right Reflection*. The Right Reflection alludes to the

fact that none of us see ourselves directly, only through the reflection of others. Sometimes those reflections are distorted due to dysfunctional relationships or destructive cultural messages.

Books as recent as *The Confidence Code* (Kay & Shipman, 2014) and concepts as old as the Imposter Phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) point to the reality that women view themselves as less-qualified, intelligent, and deserving than men or other women. They receive these messages from somewhere and internalize them to the point they become part of who they perceive they are. One challenge to this work is since women view themselves this way, they may be less open to alternative, empowering messages. This capstone will conclude with strategies to help women improve their self-acceptance and alleviate the suffering associated with low self-acceptance.

### **The Self and Self-Acceptance**

#### **The Self**

Before we can discuss the concept of self-acceptance, we need to define what we mean by the term *self*. *The Oxford American Dictionary* defines *self* as: “A person’s essential being that distinguishes them from others: a person’s particular nature or personality; the qualities that make a person individual or unique.” Leary and Tangney (2003) found 66 distinct self-constructs used in psychological scholarship. They group these 66 constructs into five categories: the self as 1) total person, 2) personality, 3) the experienced subject of consciousness, 4) beliefs about oneself, and 5) executive agent of consciousness.

William James (1890/1950) defined self as “everything we are tempted to call by the name of ‘me’” and referred to several selves: the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self. Baumeister and Bushman (2010) also described three selves: self knowledge (self-concept), social self (or public self) and agent-self (or executive function). Broder (2013) defines self as

including one's characteristics, traits, memories, thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviors and maintains that the self is fluid over time.

Buddhism thinks the concept of the self is an illusion. According to Buddhism, an individual is a combination of form, sensation/feelings, perception/understanding, mental formations and volition, and consciousness. There is no separate individual "self." The self is viewed as illusory, essenceless, impermanent, contingent, and interdependent rather than as permanent, independent or external (David, Lynn, & Das, 2013). By radically accepting and becoming absorbed in moment-to-moment experiences, (mindfulness), we can free ourselves from this sense of a fixed self.

Kaschak (1992) brings a feminist perspective to the concept of self. She believes the concept of one true, separate self that is consistent over time and across situations reflects the masculine tendency to downplay context and connections between people and to discount the importance of relationships. Kaschak (2011) prefers to think of the self as "self-in context."

The very sense of self is a metaphor, an organizing concept. Rather than speaking of the individual as having or being a self, it may be more accurate to speak of a sense of self, which includes the physical, affective, and cognitive experience associated with this metaphor..... something like a multi-dimensional kaleidoscope (Kaschak, 2011, p.14).

So is the self fixed, fluid, or an illusion? Each view has implications for whether or not we accept ourselves or how we accept ourselves. For purposes of this paper, I will view the self as fluid.

**Acceptance and Self-Acceptance**

Williams and Lynn (2010) define acceptance as nonattachment, non-avoidance, non-judgment, tolerance, and willingness. So self-acceptance would be the non-judgment of the self. Even though the term “self-acceptance” is rather recent, the concept is ancient.

**Historical Views of Self-Acceptance.** Confucious said, “When you accept yourself, the whole world accepts you.” In Judaism, self-acceptance is defined as a realistic and accurate assessment of one’s virtues and vices, successes and failures. The whole person is not condemned but rather his or her inappropriate behaviors (Pies, 2010). The major tenet of Christianity is summarized in the Gospel of Mark: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12: 30, 31, King James Version). This statement puts the love of God, love of neighbor and love of self on equal footing. One of the basic Islamic views is that humans are the trustees of God on earth and self-acceptance is important. By realizing one’s own nature, its strengths and weaknesses, people remain balanced. They are neither haunted by their weaknesses nor arrogant about their strengths (Badawi, 2007).

**20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Views of Self-Acceptance.** Falkenstein and Haaga (2013) described the early 20<sup>th</sup> century view of self-acceptance. For example, Freud felt there was an inverse relationship between loving oneself and loving others. The way people regarded themselves (“ego-love”) would be inversely related to how they viewed others (“object-love”). If you loved yourself, you would disparage others and if you cared for others, it was to the detriment of yourself. Adler thought there was a positive relationship between loving oneself and loving others. People who feel inferior and lack self-worth will disparage others to feel better.

People who have self-worth don't need to. And finally, Fromm believed that people can only love others if they can first love themselves.

Hoffman, Lopez, and Moats, (2013) describe how the humanistic branch of psychology that became popular mid-twentieth century felt that humans were basically good in contrast with the view of humans held by behaviorism and psychoanalysis. Humanistic psychologists sought to see the good in all people. They were the forerunners of the modern positive psychology movement. Self-acceptance is a characteristic of self-actualization (Maslow) optimal functioning (Rogers) maturity (Allport) personal development (Erickson) and mental health (Jahoda) (as cited in Hoffman, Lopez, & Moats, 2013).

The psychologist most associated with self-acceptance is Albert Ellis (1973), the father of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT). He felt people spend way too much time rating themselves and the result is negative. He felt we confuse our traits, our performance and our behaviors with who we are. "Who am I" is a silly question as any answer to this question is an over-generalization. As cited in Bernard's (2013, editor) *The Strength of Self-Acceptance*,

You are not good; you are not bad; you are merely you.....I do not have intrinsic worth or worthlessness, but merely aliveness. I'd better rate my traits and acts, but not my totality or 'self.' I fully accept myself in the sense that I know I have aliveness and I choose to survive and live as happily as possible, and with minimum needless pain. I require only this knowledge and this choice – and no other kind of self-rating....I am good, not because I do very well at anything, and not because certain people tend to approve of me, but just because I am alive, because I exist. (Albert Ellis, 1973, p. 67).

**The Difference Between Self-Acceptance, Self-Compassion and Self-Esteem**

Self-acceptance generally involves a lack of judgment or rating of the self. I am what I am. There is also an understanding that the self changes from day to day so what exactly am I accepting? Ellis (1973) divides self-acceptance into two types: unconditional self-acceptance (USA) and conditional self-acceptance (CSA). USA is the self-acceptance that Ellis promotes. It is the unqualified, unreserved valuing of the self. It implies that the value of the self is indivisible, irreducible, constant. Dryden (2013) defines USA as acknowledging that each individual is human, unique, complex, in flux, and fallible. As such each “self” cannot be validly rated, but only accepted unconditionally.

Anything less than total self-acceptance is conditional self-acceptance (CSA), which most of us experience. Most of us desire to be better in some way. We feel if we are better in some area, we will be more acceptable. The problem with CSA is that we generalize our rating of a certain part of ourselves to the whole of ourselves, which is irrational. For example, if we feel we are more acceptable at a certain weight, we will deem ourselves less acceptable if we gain weight. The problem is that the self is a subtle, abstract, element of human existence and it is self-defeating and impossible to rate the acceptability of an abstraction. According to Nielsen, Szentagotai, Gavita, and Lupu (2013), it may not be possible to ignore the self, but it is possible to resist the tendency to rate the self.

Neff (2011) combats this conditional self-acceptance with what she calls “self-compassion.” Self-compassion has three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-kindness is just what it sounds like. Many of us find it more difficult to be kind to ourselves than to others. Many of us have an active voice in our head constantly critiquing our looks, our behavior, our intelligence, and our goodness. This constant voice in our heads has

been called “ticker-tape beliefs” by Reivich and Shatte (2002) as they are those “in the moment” thoughts that roll off just like a ticker-tape. Often these thoughts are out of our conscious awareness but can lead to negative emotions.

The second aspect of self-compassion is recognizing our common humanity. Neff (2011) feels this aspect of self-compassion separates self-compassion from self-acceptance. She feels self-acceptance leaves out an “essential factor – other people” (p. 61). By recognizing that we’re all in this together, we recognize our inherent interconnectedness with other people. Also we can diminish the inevitable comparison game with others where we make ourselves feel better by putting them down.

Finally, mindfulness is an essential part of self-compassion. Borrowing from Buddhism, mindfulness refers to focusing on the present moment and seeing clearly and nonjudgmentally what’s occurring. Mindfulness helps us not exaggerate the problem we may be facing.

Self-esteem was a hugely popular concept during the 90’s and early 2000’s. Kaschak (1992) defines self-esteem as our “personal judgment of worthiness.” (p. 155). All explanations of self-esteem involve some type of global rating of the self. The problem with self-esteem is that it can change by the day depending on how we rate ourselves. Humans are not known for their objectivity especially when rating themselves. The problem with self-rating is if we evaluate lowly, we will experience various psychological problems. However an excessively high level of self-esteem is also associated with psychological problems (mania, perfectionism, narcissism). For optimal well-being, it’s best just not to have the evaluation component (David, Lynn & Das, 2013).

## Measuring Self-Acceptance

There are different ways that the concept of self-acceptance has been measured. As discussed earlier, humanistic psychologists were interested in the philosophical foundations of what makes a fully-functioning, self-actualized, mature adult. At the time there wasn't a satisfactory measure of these philosophical constructs so that's where Ryff (2013) started. She began with six key components of well-being (see fig. 1) (Ryff, 2013) along with their philosophical and psychological underpinnings.

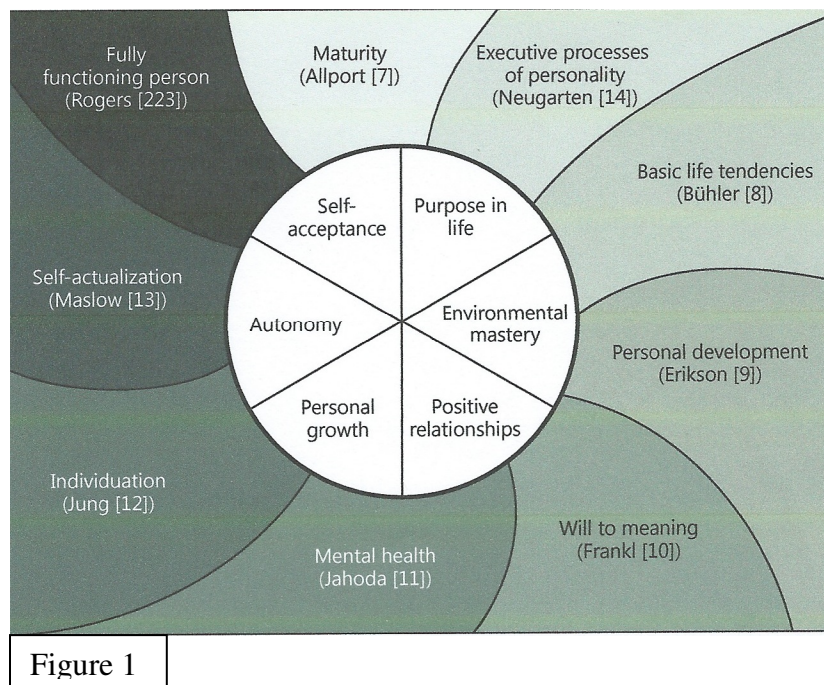


Figure 1

She then generated definitions of high and low scorers for each of the six dimensions and then wrote self-report items to operationalize the definitions. Originally she had over 80 items for each of the six subscales and pared them down to 32 and then to 20 items for each of the six subscales (120 questions in all). Since then she has experimented with 14, 9, 3, and now 7 item scales. There is growing evidence to support the 14-item scale. A copy of the 14-item scale (84 questions in all) is included in Appendix B. Definitions of high and low scorers for each of the



six dimensions is included in Appendix A. The scale has been translated into more than 30 different languages and to date, over 350 articles in more than 150 scientific journals have been published using the PWB scale.

### **Findings on Women and Self-Acceptance**

In this section, I'll summarize some of the more interesting findings concerning well-being from the PWB Scale. Unless otherwise indicated, the results are from Ryff, (2013).

- Women scored significantly higher than men on Positive Relations with Others and Personal Growth.
- There was little difference between men and women on the sub-scale of self-acceptance. O'Kelly (2013), cites a possible reason for this lack of difference. All subscales of the PWB scales tend to concentrate in the midrange. Score precision diminishes at the high and low levels of well-being. This is an area that is ripe for further research.
- Environmental Mastery and Autonomy go up with age.
- Purpose in Life and Personal Growth show dramatic declines with age.
- Having a more developed feminist identity has been linked with higher well-being (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006).
- Parenting is more challenging to the well-being of women than men (Marks, Bumpass & Jun, 2001).
- Having unhealthy aging parents undermines the well-being of young and mid-life women (Marks, Bumpass & Jun, 2001).
- Single women report higher levels of autonomy and growth than married women (Marks & Lambert, 1998).

- Income was positively related to men's but not women's self-acceptance.
- A college degree had a greater impact on self-acceptance for women than for men.
- For women born between 1931 and 1944, stopping work to raise children was a large positive predictor of self-acceptance. In contrast, women born between 1960 and 1970 who stopped work to care for their children reported significantly lower self-acceptance (Carr, 2002).
- Women with higher self-acceptance have higher self-efficacy (belief in their ability) (Srimathi & Kiran-Kumar, 2010).
- For women, unpaid work was associated with lower levels of self-acceptance and environmental mastery (Lindfors, Berntsson, & Lundberg, 2006)
- A study of older women showed that those with higher well-being had lower levels of daily salivary cortisol, lower pro-inflammatory cytokines, (key markers of the biological stress response) lower cardiovascular risk and longer duration REM sleep compared to those with lower well-being (Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004).
- The emotional disclosure of trauma has been shown to improve environmental mastery, personal growth and self-acceptance, while decreasing depressive symptoms, anxiety and somatization (Hemenover, 2003).
- Both environmental mastery and self-acceptance were significantly negatively correlated with all forms of marital abuse; physical, psychological, social, and economic. This means that women who had high environmental mastery and self-acceptance were less likely to experience marital abuse and high self-acceptance

had the highest correlation with lack of abuse. The authors concluded that women with high level of self-acceptance are less likely to be victims of marital abuse (Hamdan-Mansour, Arabiat, Sato, Obaid, & Imoto, 2011).

- Development of self-acceptance was seen as a key factor in healing the impact of childhood sexual abuse in adult survivors (Payne, 2010).

### **External Messages That May Contribute to Low Self-Acceptance in Women**

This section will discuss some of the cultural gender messages that may impact women's self-acceptance. Each woman is unique and will have her own idiosyncratic reasons for high or low self-acceptance including her family of origin, her early childhood experiences, and her level of self-awareness. The impact of these individual influences is outside the scope of this paper.

### **Sex-Role Stereotyping**

Have you heard the old saying, "Does a fish know it's in water?" The meaning of that statement is that sometimes there are things in our environment that we are not aware of until we are out of that environment, when we're a "fish out of water." That's the way it is with culture. I have observed that when we grow up surrounded by messages, beliefs, rules and customs, we don't question them. We assume their validity. We assume that they're a result of nature not nurture. That's the way the world is. So it is with the world that girls and boys are born into.

Wolfe and Naimark (1991) in their work to make REBT therapy more effective with women describe their theory of a four-step cycle of sex-role stereotyping that begins as early as infancy. They believe that the irrational beliefs of conditional self-acceptance are made worse in women due to sex-role stereotyping.

**Step 1:** Includes the sex-role socialization messages that all children receive. Pink or blue, dolls or trucks, cuddling or rough-housing, compliant or rowdy, princess or warrior, cry or

“man-up.” These messages come from parents, siblings, caregivers, teachers, the media. It does not take long for these messages to be internalized.

**Step 2:** This internalized sense of what’s appropriate causes irrational beliefs or “shoulds.” Girls should be thin, girls must be pretty to get a man, girls must be nice, etc.

**Step 3:** The emotional/behavioral consequences for the girl/woman of internalizing all these “should” are “feelings of diminished self-worth, anxiety about the consequences of sex-role-inappropriate behavior and depression over lack of control.” (p. 268)

**Step 4:** The social reactions to role compliance and role violation completes the cycle. Society notices whether a woman is complying with implicitly agreed-upon norms and there are consequences for non-compliance. Wolfe and Naimark (1991) examine four content areas through the lens of this cycle: sex and love relationships, physical image and sexuality, work and career, and victimization and self-sacrifice. The complete tables can be found in Appendix C, but I will give a brief example of each.

**Sex and love relationships:** *Message:* Women are loving and gentle. Motherhood comes naturally to them. Women aren’t complete without a man and work never takes the place of a man. *Irrational Belief:* I must be loved to be worthwhile; I’m nothing without a man; I must not put my needs first. *Emotional and Behavioral Consequences:* Guilt, low self-acceptance, searching desperately for a mate, failing to self-actualize. *Societal Reactions:* If passive/submissive, accepted but not valued. If assertive, called bitch, nag, shrew.

**Physical Image and Sexuality:** *Message:* Young, thin, beautiful women are valuable. *Irrational Belief:* If I’m not thin, I’m disgusting. *Emotional and Behavioral Consequences:* Eating disorders, anxiety, self-downing. *Societal Reactions:* Young, thin, beautiful women valued; older women invisible; overweight women ridiculed.

**Work and Career:** *Message:* Women are emotional. *Irrational Belief:* I really don't belong in a position of power. *Consequence:* Lower aspirations, less risk taking. *Societal Reaction:* Discrimination in promotions, salaries.

**Victimization and Self-Sacrifice:** *Message:* It's a woman's fault if the man is unhappy or the relationship fails. *Irrational Belief:* If he's angry, it's my fault. I'm a failure. *Consequence:* Staying in abusive relationship. *Societal Reaction:* Physical and psychological battering of women.

### **Patriarchy**

Carol Gilligan (2011) in *Joining the Resistance*, points to an even deeper cause than sex role stereotyping for the lack of self-acceptance in women. She blames the patriarchal model itself. It was reading this book a few years ago that set me on this quest to discover the roots of low self-acceptance in women and how to mitigate its damaging effects. According to Gilligan, the patriarchal model is as damaging to men as it is to women as it requires both to disavow parts of themselves. Gilligan's work started with *In a Different Voice* (1982) where she began to disagree with her mentors, Kohlberg and Erickson, on the process of moral development. Men were the measure of humanity and their qualities of autonomy and rationality (masculine qualities) were the sign of maturity. Women's qualities of affiliation and care were signs of dependence and lack of maturity. This didn't ring true for Gilligan. In *Joining the Resistance*, she defines patriarchy this way:

A hierarchy or rule of priests in which the *hieros*, the priest, is a pater, a father. In a patriarchal family or religion or culture, power and authority descend from a father or fathers, and human qualities designated masculine are privileged over those gendered feminine. By elevating some men over others (separating the men from the boys) and all

men over women, patriarchy is an order of domination. But in separating fathers from mothers and daughters and sons, and bifurcating human qualities into masculine and feminine, patriarchy also creates rift in the psyche, dividing everyone from parts of themselves (Gilligan, 2011, p. 19).

When boys and girls are initiated into the codes of appropriate patriarchal behaviors and when outliers are punished and excluded for non-compliance, it is not unusual for them to develop psychological distress. According to Gilligan, this starts for boys around the age of five to seven. Playing with dolls, dressing-up, and crying make a boy a sissy or a mama's boy. Up until adolescence boys experience more depression than girls, and Gilligan maintains that it is because these restrictive gender norms are enforced earlier with boys than with girls. Gilligan reflects Wolfe and Naimark's (1991) arguments in that these norms become internalized to the point they seem part of nature rather than a manifestation of culture.

Girls get their initiation during adolescence, a time when girls speak of feeling pressured to choose between having a voice and having relationships. Virginia Woolf calls this "adultery of the brain," by which she means betraying your mind. In a TEDx talk I did in 2012, I discussed my personal experience with adultery of the brain. I'm reprinting an excerpt here and including a link to the talk: <http://www.tedxomaha.com/pam-hernandez/>

"Adultery of the Brain" is a phrase that Virginia Woolf used to describe what all women do when attempting to get along in the world. The ethicist and psychologist, Carol Gilligan, quotes Woolf in her book, *Joining the Resistance*. She's referring to that point in a young adolescent girl's life when she realizes she can either be true to herself **OR** have relationships (friends, boyfriends, success in school, work, life). She can't have

both. So the girl “cheats” on herself. She commits adultery of the brain in order to go along and get along.

This excerpt from Gilligan’s work hit me between the eyes. I thought I was the only one who’d felt that way. As a small child, growing up in Grand Island Nebraska, I wasn’t really aware I was a girl. My dad coached basketball and baseball, and the only way he knew how to play with his kids was to play ball. I could hit pop flies and field grounders with the best of them. My older brother was required to let me tag along with him and his friends so my early years were a blur of sandlot ball, cowboys and Indians, war, king of the hill and various other blood sports. As long as I could keep up, and I could, my sex didn’t matter. At recess, I was picked first for teams, and I had a collection of baseball cards that could have funded my retirement if my basset hound hadn’t eaten them.

But then, just as I entered adolescence, we moved to Lincoln, Nebraska and everything changed. I made friends, but they played games like hopscotch, Chinese jump rope, and jacks. Boring! Around this time, my mother sat me down for “The Talk.” I’m sure she was hoping for a mother-daughter bonding moment, but I started crying. I said, “You have got to be kidding! Every month?!”

As I entered Junior High, (we didn’t have middle school), I became disoriented. Everything I was good at was no longer valued. I was a good athlete; I was smart, and I wasn’t silly. I don’t think I’d ever giggled in my life. These traits were not what led to success as a teenage girl in the late 60’s. I didn’t know how to flirt, wear make up or navigate in a world where popularity was everything and the path to it ever shifting.

From my vantage point, boys had it easier. They just had to become more of what they already were. Become bigger, stronger athletes; get smarter and more educated; and, act more mature rather than less. And when they got mad, they could act mad and get it over with. I entered adolescence confident, competent, and centered, and exited with a distorted body image, disordered eating patterns, and damning misperceptions of my self worth. I've spent the last 30 years recovering. (Hernandez, 2012)

### **Sexism**

Glick and Fiske (1996) developed a theory of sexism formulated as ambivalence toward women. They developed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and it differentiates between hostile and benevolent sexism. I found this explanation very helpful as when I sometimes point out a sexist belief to someone, the answer is invariably, "I'm not sexist; I love women." Glick and Fiske discuss the complicated relationship between men and women. Men have structural power (patriarchy) and women have dyadic power. Men depend on women for reproduction, sexual gratification, and companionship, and that dependency makes them uncomfortable.

Both hostile and benevolent sexism share three components: paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality. Paternalism can be viewed as dominative or protective. Hostile sexism views women as not fully competent adults who shouldn't be in charge whereas benevolent sexism manifests as we have to protect and cherish women because of their weakness.

Gender differentiation is about which qualities are associated with men and which are associated with women. Hostile sexism associates qualities of leadership, autonomy and strength with men. Benevolent sexism focuses on the qualities associated with women such as sensitivity



to feelings, caring, etc. When a man speaks of his wife as his “better half,” that is an example of benevolent sexism.

Heterosexuality is the most complicated sources of men’s ambivalence towards women. Heterosexual men are dependent upon women for sexual gratification. This creates a vulnerability and ambivalence in men. Often they resolve this ambivalence by dividing women into subtypes such as Madonna or whore (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Glick and Fiske administered their Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) to six different groups. Some of the themes that emerged were as follows:

- Women exaggerate the existence of sexism,
- Male-female relationships are characterized by a power struggle,
- Women take advantage of men, and
- Women use sexual relationships to manipulate and control men.

What was interesting is that women held similar beliefs, not to the extent of men, but they still held them. Glick and Fiske (1996) conclude that women’s adoption of sexist beliefs reflect their tendency to embrace or reject prevailing cultural norms, which reinforces what Wolfe and Naimark (1991) said about sex role stereotyping and what Gilligan (2011) maintained about patriarchy. It should be noted that there are many scales available to measure gender-role attitudes. A search of *PsychInfo* indicated that the Glick and Fiske inventory has been cited 1651 times, and in an analysis of various scales, McHugh and Frieze (1997) note that the ASI is the only inventory to include benevolent sexism and to include interpersonal items from a power perspective. They also cite that Glick and Fiske ground their conceptualization of ambivalent sexism in solid theory of gender relations.

## **Thinking Styles That May Contribute to Low Self-Acceptance in Women**

### **Rumination**

It's been said that humans are the only animals that can reflect on themselves. Reflection can be both helpful and harmful. When we reflect on ourselves repetitively, and passively focus on distress and the possible causes and consequences of our symptoms, this reflection is referred to as *Rumination*. Rumination has been shown to make depression worse and is associated with anxiety, binge eating and drinking and self-harm (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008). Both men and women get depressed, (women more than double than men) but more women than men ruminate when depressed (Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001).

There are many theories as to why women ruminate more than men. One is that women are socialized to believe they are more emotional than men. Parents sympathize more with girls concerning sadness and anxiety than they do with boys. Girls may also believe that the sources of their negative emotions (e.g. hormones) are less controllable than the source of men's negative emotions. Whatever the cause, the belief that negative emotions are uncontrollable appears to contribute to gender differences in rumination (Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001). In this study, an initial group of men and women living in San Francisco completed three surveys each a year apart. A total of 740 people representing ages 25-75 completed all three surveys, which included items from the Ruminative Responses Scale, The Beck Depression Inventory, the Beck Anxiety Inventory, and a three item measure constructed for the study that was used to assess participants' beliefs about how much control they had over experiencing negative emotions.

We have seen in other writings (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003) that women tend to be more invested in positive relationships with others than men are. They score higher in this measure of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989), which is described as "having warm, satisfying, trusting

relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships.” (p. 1072) Women often define themselves in terms of relationships so they have more people about whom to ruminate. Women are more likely than men to cross a line between being emotionally connected and emotionally over-involved (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003). They feel responsible for every aspect of their relationships, which helps to mediate the gender difference in rumination (Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001).

Another reason cited for why women ruminate more is their lower sense of environmental mastery than men. Nolen-Hoeksema and Jackson (2001) theorize that this lower sense of mastery leads to feeling less in control over important events in their lives, compared to men, and is an important contributor to the gender difference in rumination. Women friends often make matters worse. The mark of a good friend is to be sympathetic, nonjudgmental, and to validate one another. These traits are valuable, but rumination has been shown to interfere with effective problem-solving by making the person more pessimistic and fatalistic (Nolen-Hoeksema, et al., 2008). Women often don’t encourage each other to problem solve.

### **Perfectionism**

Perfectionism is another characteristic that is associated with low self-acceptance. What do we mean by perfectionism? Hewitt and Flett (1991) propose that perfectionism is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of three distinct types of perfectionism. The main difference between each type is the object to whom the perfectionism is directed.

*Self-Oriented Perfectionism* is perfectionism directed at oneself. It involves such behaviors as setting exacting standards for oneself and stringently evaluating and censuring one’s

own behavior. The motivation for this behavior is seen as striving to attain perfection in one's endeavors as well as striving to avoid failures.

*Other-Oriented Perfectionism* is perfectionism directed at others. A person with this type of perfectionism has unrealistic standards for significant others, places importance on other people being perfect, and stringently evaluates others' performance.

The last type of perfectionism is *Socially-Prescribed Perfectionism*, which involves the perceived need to attain standards and expectations prescribed by others. The individual often feels that others have unrealistic standards for them, evaluate them stringently and exert pressure on them to be perfect. Other theorists (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990) maintain that perfectionism also involves setting excessively high personal standards (PS), an over-concern for mistakes (CM), doubts about the quality of one's performance (DA) an over-emphasis on organization (O), perceived parental criticism (PC) and perceived parental expectations.

Several studies have been completed studying the relationship between perfectionism, unconditional self-acceptance and depression. In one study by Flett, Besser, Davis and Hewitt (2003), the participants took the *Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale* (MPS), (Hewitt & Flett, 1991), *The Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire* (USAQ) (Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001), and *The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression* (CES-D). The first main finding that resulted from this study was that all three perfectionism dimensions measured by the MPS were associated with lower levels of unconditional self-acceptance. Secondly, socially prescribed perfectionism was the MPS dimension with the strongest association with low unconditional self-acceptance. Further, the results indicated that low unconditional self-acceptance was associated with depression. After conducting a mediational analysis, the authors concluded that unconditional self-acceptance is an important mediator of the association between socially

prescribed perfectionism and depression. One possibility for the increased association of socially prescribed perfectionism and low self- acceptance is that it's the only perfectionistic dimension that is not under the individual's control. It is derived from the perception of other people's imposed expectations and is reactive rather than proactive (Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Mitchelson and Burns (1998) studied the effect on subjective well-being of perfectionism in career mothers. One conclusion of their study was that perfectionism can be domain specific with more of the career mothers reporting perfectionism in the work domain as opposed to the home domain. Overall they found that perfectionism does have a negative relationship with career womens' dual roles. Perfectionism was positively related to exhaustion and cynicism at work and parental distress at home. Also, other-oriented perfectionistic mothers who set high expectations for their children and whose children don't meet their expectations, may become vulnerable to dejection-related emotions and an impaired sense of parenting competence.

### **Explanatory Style**

A basic definition of explanatory style is our tendency to offer similar sorts of explanations for different events (Buchanan & Seligman, 2013). Explanatory style involves three areas: me – not me, always – not always, everything – not everything. For example, if I do poorly on a test, I may conclude that I'm stupid (it's me), I never do well on tests (always) and I am destined to fail in all areas of my life (everything). Or I may conclude that the teacher asked trick questions (not me), it was just one test (not always) and doesn't mean I'm not successful in other areas (not everywhere). The first response is an example of a pessimistic explanatory style and the second is an optimistic explanatory style.

Pessimistic explanatory styles have been seen as a risk factor for depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992). Most studies of preadolescent children show that boys

are somewhat more likely to be depressed than girls, but sometime between the ages of 12 and 15, girls begin to show higher rates of depression than boys. This greater rate of depression in females has been obtained for every adult age group except the elderly (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990). A cross-sectional study of children at the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade showed that boys had more pessimistic styles than girls until the 10<sup>th</sup> grade where girls became more pessimistic than boys. This change in explanatory style paralleled the depression data; the girls became more depressed and more pessimistic between sixth and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Boys became less depressed and more optimistic between ages 13 and 15. Boys continued to grow in optimism as they moved through adolescence but girls continued to be quite pessimistic. Nolen-Hoeksema and Girgus (1995) offer three possible explanations.

1). People's expectations and evaluations of girls and boys become increasingly sex-biased as children grow older. Studies of adults have shown that women's qualifications are evaluated more negatively than men even when they are identical (Firth, 1982). One study found that when a job application with a male name on it was sent to an accounting firm, the applicant was more likely to pass an initial screening than when the same application was submitted with a female name on it. In general when a man does well at a task, evaluators tend to attribute his success to ability, but when a woman succeeds, they tend to attribute her success to luck. Similarly when a man fails, his failure is often attributed to bad luck, but when a woman fails, her failure is often attributed to lack of ability (Basow, 1986.) As girls grow older, they may increasingly face messages that their accomplishments are due to external, unstable, specific factors (luck, affirmative action) and failures are due to internal, stable and global factors (lack of ability, weakness). If she internalizes these messages, she may develop a pessimistic explanatory style.

2) The actual amount of control and number of opportunities girls have may decrease as they grow older. As girls reach adolescence, adults (especially parents) may restrict the activities and movements of their daughters due to concern about their safety. Also, sexual abuse of females increases in adolescence and contributes to helplessness and depression in some women (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990). These experiences may lead young women to believe that the causes of negative events in their lives are stable and global (pessimistic). Nolen-Hoeksema and Girgus (1995) conclude that the most stable and global attribution is the fact that they are female.

3) Finally, during adolescence many girls become very concerned about their physical appearance. Girls tend to dislike the physical changes that happen in puberty, especially the fat and weight they gain. In contrast, boys like the increase in muscle mass and other pubertal changes their bodies undergo (Dombusch et al., 1984). Girls are pressured by society to achieve an ideal body shape that for most of them is impossible to achieve. This frustration and helplessness may lead some girls to develop a pessimistic way of explaining other events in their lives (McCarthy, 1990).

Rumination, perfectionism and pessimistic explanatory style can feed on each other. Combine these intrapersonal thinking styles with the external messages girls and women receive (sex-role stereotyping, patriarchy, and sexism), and you have a potent recipe for low self-acceptance.

### **Manifestations of Low Self-Acceptance in Women**

This section will discuss some of the ways low self-acceptance can manifest in girls and women.

**The Imposter Phenomenon**

The Imposter Phenomenon was originally identified by Clance and Imes (1978) to describe the feelings of fraudulence reported by high achieving women. Elements of the imposter phenomenon include: (a) feelings of intellectual phoniness; (b) beliefs that one's successes have been based on luck, hard work, or charm rather than ability; (c) lack of confidence in one's ability to replicate past successes; (d) fear of evaluation and failure; (e) inability to take pleasure in one's achievements; and (f) fear that others will discover one's incompetence. These women believe that they have successfully deceived others into believing they are more competent than they really are and fear that their true lack of ability will be discovered at any time. They also attributed their success to factors other than ability such as hard work, luck, and knowing the right people (Clance & O'Toole, 1987). The Imposter Phenomenon has been identified in men as well as women. One study (King & Cooley, 1995) found significantly higher imposter ratings for female than male college students. Another study (Fried-Buchalter, 1995) found no significant gender differences in a sample of marketing managers, and Topping and Kimmel (1985) found significantly higher imposter ratings for male compared to female faculty members. In a more recent study of 186 college students, McGregor, Gee, and Posey (2008) still found significantly higher IP scores among women than men. Clance and Imes (1987) acknowledge that men may suffer from IP feelings, yet they believe that women are more likely to be limited and limited more powerfully by the Imposter Phenomenon. "The opinion of the present authors is that the men are encouraged by mentors and society to go ahead in spite of their imposter fears. They are encouraged to override their fears and to go for success." (p. 2).



Clance and O'Toole (1987) describe the Imposter Cycle that is self-perpetuating:

A person faces an exam, project, or task. She experiences doubt or fear. She questions whether or not she will succeed this time. She may experience anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, nightmares, etc. She works hard, overprepares, or procrastinates, and then prepares in a frenzied manner. She succeeds and receives positive feedback. The whole cycle is reinforced. She may have a superstitious belief, "I must suffer in order to succeed." Doubting is reinforced (Clance & O'Toole, 1987, p. 4).

Kumar and Jagacinski (2006) conducted a study to determine the different ways the Imposter Phenomenon manifests itself in men and women. First of all, fewer men than women scored high on the Imposter Phenomenon Scale (IPS, Clance & O'Toole, 1987). Secondly, men's imposter fears differed from women. Their imposter fears seemed to be driven by a fear of failure. Women's imposter fears focused on the need to outperform others to feel competent.

Dweck (1986) posited two theories of intelligence: the fixed entity theory and the incremental theory. The fixed entity theory of intelligence is the belief that intelligence is a fixed entity that you cannot really change. The incremental theory posits that intelligence is malleable with effort. In Kumar and Jagacinski's (2006) study, they also studied men's and women's theory of intelligence. For women, theory of intelligence was related to imposter fears. Those who agreed with the entity theory of intelligence (intelligence is fixed) were more likely than men to harbor doubts about their intelligence. Clance and O'Toole (1987) stated that male and female imposters were qualitatively different and that because male imposters have more social support in their academic and work environments they are better able to cope with their fears.

September, McCarrey, Baranowsky, Parent and Schindler (2001) conducted a study on the relation between well-being, imposter feelings, and gender role orientation among university

students. They didn't divide their study into male and female but rather masculine and feminine. The first distinction is biological; the second is related to gender roles in society. They labeled personality traits that are associated with the stereotypic feminine gender role as *expressive* and the term *instrumental* to describe personality traits that are associated with the stereotypic masculine gender role. Those who scored high in expressive traits and low in instrumental traits were deemed *Expressives*. Those who scored high in instrumental traits and low in expressive traits were deemed *Instrumentals*. Those who scored high in both expressive and instrumental traits were deemed *Androgynous*. Those who scored low in both expressive and instrumental traits were deemed *Undifferentiated*.

They had the participants complete three measures: Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (PWB; Ryff, 1989), the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (IP Scale; Clance & O'Toole, 1987), and the Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire (EPAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Holahan, 1979). Some of the more pertinent results are as follows:

- On all the well-being subscales except Positive Relations with Others, the androgynous group scored highest, followed by the instrumental (masculine) group, the expressive (feminine) group and finally the undifferentiated group. The authors concluded that a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics resulted in the highest well-being.
- Significantly more women than men fell into the expressive (feminine) group as opposed to the instrumental (masculine) group, but 1/3 of the women fell into the androgynous group. The authors concluded these findings reflect a shift away from stereotypic gender roles particularly among university women.

- Participants with high imposter phenomenon (IP) scores reported lower scores for self-acceptance and environmental mastery even though their academic performance (GPA) was as high as that of the low-IP participants. This lower well-being was attributed to the high-IP participants' heightened sense of self-criticism and a lower sense of control over important outcomes.
- There was only one area where the expressive participants scored higher than instrumentals, and that was in positive relations with others

### **The Confidence Gap**

Along with feeling like an imposter comes a corresponding lack of self-confidence. Considering the external messages women receive, and their propensity to rumination, pessimistic explanatory style and perfectionism, it's no wonder that women lack self-confidence. In a recently published book, *The Confidence Code*, Kay and Shipman (2014) highlight the toll that lack of confidence takes on women personally, financially, and professionally.

It is evident even in college. At Manchester Business School in England, Professor Marilyn Davidson says the problem stems from a lack of confidence and expectation (Davidson & Burke, 2004). Each year she asks her students what they expect to earn, and what they deserve to earn, five years after graduation. On average, the men think they deserve \$80,000 a year and the women \$64,000.

In a Cornell Study (Ehrlinger & Dunning, 2003) researchers gave male and female college students a pop quiz on scientific reasoning. Before the quiz, students rated themselves on their scientific skills. On scale of one to ten, the women gave themselves a 6.5 on average and the men gave themselves a 7.6. When it came to assessing how well they answered the questions, women thought they got 5.8 out of 10 right; men thought they got 7.1. How did they actually do?

About the same, women 7.5 and men 7.9 (statistically insignificant according to the authors.)

The students were then asked to participate in a science competition for prizes. Only 49% of the women signed up for the competition; 71% of the men did even though both the men and the women were equivalent in ability. After further analysis, the authors concluded that it wasn't specifically gender that caused the lower interest by women; it was the self-view that they were poor in scientific reasoning. Those women who rated themselves high on scientific skills were as interested in the competition as were the men. It was just that more women rated themselves low on scientific skills.

Hewlett-Packard conducted a study (Lee & Billington, 1995) to figure out how to get more women into top management. What they discovered was that women at H-P applied for promotions only when they believed they met 100 percent of the qualifications necessary for the job. Men applied when they thought they could meet 60% of the job requirements. So, essentially, women feel confident only when they are perfect.

In another study at the University of California, Berkeley (Anderson, Brion, Moore & Kennedy, 2012) researchers studied the role of confidence vs. competence. They gave a group of 242 students a list of historical names and events, and asked them to put a check mark by the ones they knew. Among the names were people who didn't exist and events that never happened. They found a link between the number of fakes a student picked and how excessively confident the student was. At the end of the semester, they conducted another survey of the group. Students who had picked the most fakes achieved the highest social status, defined as respect, prominence, and influence an individual enjoys in the eyes of others. So despite being the less competent students, they ended up being the most respected and had the most influence with their peers. Women often feel that competence is the key to success. Kay and Shipman (2014)

conclude that having talent isn't merely about being competent; confidence is actually a part of that talent. You have to have it to be good at your job.

### **Ophelia and the Reflecting Pool**

In 1990, Mary Pipher wrote a book entitled, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. She was concerned with the phenomena she witnessed in her clinical practice in Lincoln, Nebraska, my home. She saw young girls who at age nine and ten were spunky, unself-conscious and outspoken, and who three or four years later had turned into quiet, beaten-down, and self-destructive teenagers very similar to my own story detailed in my TEDx talk. She determined that it couldn't be that all these families were dysfunctional. She concluded that it was our culture that was toxic.

Like Gilligan, Pipher blames the phenomena on the social scripts that girls internalize at this age. They experience social pressure to put aside their authentic selves and become who society wants them to be. Pipher alludes to the character of Ophelia in *Hamlet*. Ophelia is a happy young girl but with adolescence she loses herself. She falls in love with Hamlet and lives for his approval. She is torn between Hamlet and the demands of her father. When Hamlet rejects her, she goes mad and drowns herself in a stream filled with flowers. Pipher says it is common for adolescent girls to report dreams of drowning, of being paralyzed and of being stuck in quicksand. Gilligan (2011) also describes the recurrent theme of adolescent girls' dreams; either drowning or being attacked while paralyzed. It doesn't take much interpretation to make the connection between the dreams and the loss of agency that girls feel at this age.

None of us can see ourselves directly. We can only see our reflection. "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all" as the old fairy tale goes. Narcissus from Greek mythology looked into the reflecting pool and fell in love with his reflection. Most girls and

women do not fall in love with their reflection. The metaphorical water we peer into searching for ourselves is cloudy and toxic with societal messages that tell us to be less than who we are. We add our own poison to this reflection with our combination of low self-acceptance, perfectionism, rumination, and pessimistic explanatory style. It's no wonder we end up feeling like imposters and lack self-confidence and self-acceptance. But it's not too late. We can cleanse the water, clear up our reflections and become the women we're capable of being. The next section will discuss some of the ways women can improve their self-acceptance.

### **How to Improve Self-Acceptance in Women**

#### **Deflecting Toxic External Messages**

One of the best strategies for improving our self-acceptance is to be aware of the external messages that are poisoning our reflecting pool. Look at the image of a reflecting pool below.



What do you see? Now tilt your head to the left until your left ear is touching your left shoulder. Now what do you see? If you didn't see it before, by changing your perspective you should see a picture of a mother and child.

You'll never be able to view this picture again and not see the mother and child. That's the way it is with toxic external messages. Once you're aware of sex role stereotyping, hostile and benevolent sexism, and patriarchal assumptions, you can't become unaware. So what do you do about these messages? Mary Pipher's advice (1990) is to become consciously counter-cultural. Don't subscribe to the media messages. Don't watch *Desperate Housewives of Atlanta*, *New York*, *Los Angeles*, etc. Question your own and others' assumptions. Pay attention to what you say and think about other women. Watch how you treat other women. Women have internalized these toxic messages as much as men.

### **Changing Problematic Thinking Styles**

There are many strategies to overcome the problematic thinking styles that have been described earlier: rumination, perfectionism and explanatory style.

In her book, *Women Who Think Too Much*, Nolen-Hoeksema (2003) explains that women who are in the midst of over-thinking feel that their obsessive thoughts are actually helping them get at the root of their issues. But instead of offering life-altering insights, usually this overthinking leads to tunnel vision where only problems are focused on. Nolen-Hoeksema says a critical first step is recognizing that "overthinking is not your friend" (p.60). She offers several strategies for interrupting the rumination: using positive distractions (such as exercising or reading a book), policing your thoughts and silently telling yourself to *Stop* when you catch yourself overthinking, writing down your ruminating thoughts and putting them away, distracting yourself with a pleasant activity such as a massage etc. Once you have a handle on the ruminating thoughts, Nolen-Hoeksema recommends several strategies to help focus on solutions and to avoid future overthinking traps by developing healthier ways of dealing with problems.

In their book, *The Resilience Factor*, Reivich and Shatte (2002) offer several techniques to overcome these negative thinking styles and build inner resilience. Three of the techniques that are especially applicable to this topic are the ABC Model, Thinking Traps, and Icebergs.

### The ABC Model

The ABC Model is a method of examining your thinking to better understand how your mind works. The ABC Model helps build your self-awareness of problematic thinking that may be interfering with your well-being. The three components of the ABC Model are as follows:

A = Adversity/Activating Event (Something happens that upsets you).

B = Beliefs (Thoughts that run through your mind and that determine how you feel and what you do in response to the adversity)

C = Consequences (The way you **feel** and what you **do** in the moment of the adversity)

### ABC Example:

<b>Adversity:</b> Your daycare closes due to snow and both you and your husband have commitments at work and can't stay home. You end up staying home.	
<b>Beliefs:</b> What you said to yourself in the heat of the moment.	<b>Consequences:</b> Emotions and behaviors
Why am I always the one who has to stay home? My job is as important as his. This is going to put me farther behind. My boss is going to kill me.	Angry, upset at husband, impatient with kids,
Chart format based on Reivich, Ph.D.	

Normally, we feel that the adversity (daycare closing) causes the consequence (angry, upset at husband, impatient with kids). The underlying beliefs about the power dynamics with our spouse and our obligations to our boss are not in our conscious awareness.



By slowing down to consider the beliefs in a situation like this, we can begin to gain insight and not just respond automatically. When we first begin to use the ABC model, we aren't going to change our behavior in the moment. Usually, we will reflect later on the situation and begin to analyze why we were angry and anxious. Below are some common beliefs that trigger emotional consequences. In the example we just cited, we were angry at our husband and anxious about work. By looking at the emotional/behavioral consequence column below, we can see that anger is often a consequence of feeling we have been harmed. Anxiety is often a consequence of feeling that something bad is going to happen, and we can't handle it.

In the daycare example, our belief was about harm that our husband didn't take off work and our belief was about danger that there may be negative consequences at work for leaving. By bringing these beliefs into our conscious awareness, we can address them. With practice, we can interrupt our thinking in the moment and hopefully redirect our emotional consequence. Ideally, we can anticipate the type of situations that elicit a particularly troublesome emotional consequence and plan for it in advance. For example, if we know that childcare emergencies will cause issues with our spouse and our work, we can discuss beforehand how we'll handle. Perhaps we agree to alternate taking off work, or we have emergency daycare backup, or we arrange with our work to be able to work occasionally from home.

So to summarize, take a situation that has upset you in the last few weeks, identify the A (what happened) and the C (your reaction) and using the chart below diagnose the theme of the beliefs that caused the emotional/behavioral consequence.

**B-C Connections**

<b>Belief</b>	<b>Emotional and Behavioral Consequences</b>
Loss <i>(I have lost something)</i>	Sadness/Withdrawal
Danger <i>(Something bad is going to happen, and I can't handle it)</i>	Anxiety/Agitation
Tresspass <i>(I have been harmed)</i>	Anger/Aggression
Inflicting harm <i>(I have caused harm)</i>	Guilt/Apoloizing
Negative comparison <i>(I don't measure up)</i>	Embarrassment/Hiding
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**Thinking Traps and Icebergs**

Our brain takes mental shortcuts to simplify its work. Sometimes these shortcuts leave out vital information and we jump to conclusions based on the specific shortcut we're taking. When the shortcut is not helpful, we call that a *thinking trap*. Reivich and Shatte, (2002) discuss eight common thinking traps: jumping to conclusions, tunnel vision, overgeneralizing, magnifying and minimizing, personalizing, externalizing, mind reading, and emotional reasoning. These thinking traps can sometimes be just the "tip of the iceberg" signaling deeply-held beliefs that can wreck our best intentions. Most of us have a pattern to the types of shortcuts we favor.

- **Jumping to Conclusions**

- All thinking traps involve a specific type of jumping to conclusions. The word "jumping" sums up the trap. By jumping to a conclusion, we are skipping over information, which may be vital. We're assuming we know what's going on in the situation even though we don't have any evidence.

- *Example:* Your boss leaves you a message to call her right away. You assume that something has gone wrong and that you or one of your employees is in trouble.
- *What you should do to interrupt your thinking?* Slow down
- *What question should you ask yourself?* What facts do I know? Maybe she wants to share some good news.

- **Tunnel Vision**

- Tunnel vision is focusing on a few details instead of seeing the whole picture.
- *Example:* You give a presentation to the Board of Directors on executive compensation. You present thorough documentation, but one of your figures has a number transposed, which the CEO catches. You think to yourself, “I can’t believe I screwed up those numbers. I’m such an idiot. I can’t do anything right.”
- *What you should do to interrupt your thinking?* Widen your field of vision. Include more information. For example, remember that you presented very complex concepts to people not familiar with compensation.
- *What questions should you ask yourself?* What important information am I not including?

- **Overgeneralizing**

- Overgeneralizing is when we observe someone’s specific behavior and then generalize to their entire character. We can do this about others or about ourselves. We’ll focus on how we do this about ourselves.
- *Example:* You’re running late for a meeting because you got caught up in your email and didn’t pay attention to the time. The meeting is with the executive team

and you're presenting. You think, "I'm such an idiot. Why can't I do anything right. They'll think I'm such a screwup."

- *What should you do to interrupt your thinking?* Concentrate on the behavior. Don't globalize to their/your character. "I need to find a way to not be late to meetings."
- *What questions should you ask yourself?* Is there a specific behavior that explains the situation? "I tend to get caught up in what I'm doing. I need to set my alarm on my computer to remind me 15 minutes before I have a meeting."

- **Magnifying and Minimizing**

- With this thinking trap, we magnify what goes wrong and minimize what goes right. Both sides are unbalanced.
- *Example:* You're presenting the quarterly benefit update to the executive committee and you're asked a couple of questions you're not sure of the answer. You also present several pages of pertinent information accurately and the President praises you for keeping benefits under budget and implementing a wellness program. After you're out of the room, you apologize to your VP saying, "I can't believe I didn't know the answer to those two questions."
- *What should you do to interrupt your thinking?* Balance the good and the bad. If necessary, draw a line down a piece of paper and list what went right on one side and what went wrong on the other?
- *What questions should you ask yourself?* What went right? What went wrong?

- **Personalizing**

- No matter what the situation, somehow you're responsible for it.

- *Example:* You son's teacher emails you and says your son hasn't turned in his last three math assignments and hasn't been paying attention in class. Your first thought is, "I should have asked him if he had his homework done and checked to make sure it was in his backpack. If I hadn't gone to that business dinner Tuesday night, I could have helped him."
- *What should you do to interrupt your thinking?* Look outside yourself? "Is it your homework?"
- *What questions should you ask yourself?* How have others' actions contributed to this result? "What's your son's role in this situation?"
- **Externalizing**
  - No matter what the situation, somehow it's someone else's responsibility.
  - *Example:* Your cleaning person puts things into drawers and cupboards and you have trouble finding them. You think, "Why does she do that? She's irresponsible. I spend half the day trying to figure out where she put stuff."
  - *What should you do to interrupt your thinking?* Look inside yourself.
  - *What questions should you ask yourself?* Do I own some of the responsibility for this result? "Perhaps I should leave a basket for her to put items into if she isn't sure where they go. Or perhaps I should pick up clutter before she comes to clean."
- **Mind Reading**
  - You're not Spock from *Star Trek*. You can't do the Vulcan Mind Meld and read others' minds. Neither can they read yours.

- *Example:* Your workout partner is quiet one morning as you're walking together and you just know she's mad at you about something.
- *What should you do to interrupt your thinking?* Speak up and ask her.
- *What questions should you ask yourself?* Did I ask her what was bothering her?  
Did I express myself?

- **Emotional Reasoning**

- This thinking trap happens when you allow your emotional state to get in the way of accurate perceptions.
- *Example:* You have surgery coming up. Even though the likelihood of dying during surgery is very small, you have severe anxiety leading up to the event.
- *What should you do to interrupt your thinking?* Practice separating your feelings from the facts.
- *What questions should you ask yourself?* What questions do I need to ask to get the facts?

## **Icebergs**

This is the term that Reivich and Shatte (2002) use to describe underlying beliefs we may hold about how the world should operate. Like an iceberg, these beliefs may be enormous and for the most part invisible to us. They may be part of our metaphorical reflecting pool. Reivich and Shatte (2002) divide iceberg beliefs into three common themes: achievement, acceptance and control. *Achievement:* People with this type of iceberg feel success is the most important thing in life and failure is not an option. Perfectionists may hold this iceberg. *Acceptance:* This iceberg revolves around the need to be liked, accepted, praised and included by others. Those who hold this belief may score high on positive relations with others and feel angst when conflict

occurs with others. *Control*: People with this type of iceberg have a need to be in control of situations and will feel uncomfortable in situations not in their control.

Icebergs, like many deeply-held beliefs are learned from our environment and people can hold more than one iceberg belief. One way to detect if you're dealing with an iceberg belief is to conduct an ABC analysis of your situation. If your consequence seems out of proportion to your beliefs about the situation, you may be dealing with an iceberg belief.

All three of these skills from Reivich and Shatte's *The Resilience Factor* (2002) – ABC Model, Thinking Traps and Icebergs – can help us change problematic thinking behaviors. Becoming aware of the messages we've been given and internalized, exploring our thinking and beliefs and applying the appropriate remedy can go a long way to cleaning and clarifying our reflecting pool.

### **Conclusion**

As I conducted my literature review, I found myself continually asking, “But what about \_\_\_\_? While much valuable research has been conducted, there is room for much more on the topic of self-acceptance in women, the causes and correlates of low self-acceptance, the impact of low self-acceptance on women, and practical evidence-based interventions that improve women's self-acceptance. For example, some of the areas that need further exploration include:

- More studies on the gender differences in self-acceptance at specific ages (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, older ages) and thoughts about what accounts for any differences.
- More studies on the relationship between external gender messages and thinking styles (perfectionism, rumination, explanatory styles)
- More interventions that are shown to improve self-acceptance in women.

I am a practitioner not a researcher and I am incredibly indebted to and impressed by the research that has been conducted to date in the area of self-acceptance in women. I came to the MAPP program to gain a theoretical framework to support my 30+ years of personal observation in corporate America. Much has been written about difficulties women face in organizations, the reality of the glass ceiling, and even how women undermine other women. I have been a participant in and observer of these difficulties. I feel strongly that my calling is to help women. I feel that the foundational step for women to improve their lives is to improve their self-acceptance. With the knowledge I've gained during this program coupled with my 30+ years of practical experience, I plan to devote my time to helping women improve their lives by improving their self-acceptance. I will do this through speaking, workshops, writing and mentoring. I will give women the knowledge and tools they need to create a reflecting pool that supports rather than destroys their self-acceptance.



## Acknowledgements

### How *The Right Reflection* Came to Be

Back in 1964, my family moved to Lincoln, NE from Grand Island NE where my father was a teacher, administrator, coach, and my mother was a frustrated homemaker. The purported reason for the move was to allow my father to finish his doctorate at UNL. I think the real reason was to let my mother get a life. Oh, she had tried to make an interesting life wherever she went, but nothing so far in her 35 years had been enough for her. She loved her two children, but she was born in a generation where options in addition to motherhood were limited.

One day, when my older brother was in kindergarten, he came home upset. His teacher, Mrs. Curtis (a retired Army WAC) refused to display Steve's artwork with the other kids because his pictures were "wrong." He was fascinated with trucks and buses as are many little boys, but on his vehicles, the wheels were always incredibly large in relation to the rest of the vehicle. Rather than become angry with the teacher, Mom started reading books on art in order to teach Steve to draw "right." She discovered a concept called "perspective." To a 40" little boy, looking up at a large school bus, the wheels did look large. Steve wasn't wrong. He had a different perspective. Three years later, I also had Mrs. Curtis as a teacher and she hadn't changed a bit, but my mother was a different person.

Fast forward to 1965. Mom was a freshman at UNL majoring in Art. Her drawing teacher instructed the students to go outside and draw a tree. Sitting on the sidewalk in the warm spring morning, my mother apparently didn't want to draw trees. So she began a sketch for a work that she later titled, *The Three Graces*. The Three Graces from Greek Mythology are often depicted as three nude women frolicking together. They grace others with creativity, beauty, charm, etc.



As students were passing between classes, some stopped to look over the art students' shoulders and see what they were drawing. One particularly serious young man, (I imagine him with white shirt, black slacks, skinny tie, heavy horn-rimmed glasses) looked at my mother's drawing of the three nude women dancing. He peered into the distance and back at her sketch and asked confusedly, "Where do you see that?" She replied, "You have to know how to look."

My mother died ten years later at the age of 46 of colon cancer. She said she lived more in the 11 years in Lincoln than she had in the 35 years before then. She saw in whole new ways both in her art and in her life. Her picture of *The Three Graces* hangs in my entryway and has always been an inspiration to me. My goal is to help women see in whole new ways. This one's for you, Mom!

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## Appendix A

## Definitions of High and Low Scorers

## for Each of the Six Dimensions of Psychological Well-Being

1. **Self-Acceptance:**

**High scorer:** Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life.

**Low scorer:** Feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred in past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; wishes to be different than what he or she is.

2. **Positive Relations with Others:**

**High scorer:** Has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships.

**Low scorer:** Has few close, trusting relationships with others; finds it difficult to be warm, open and concerned about others; is isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others.

3. **Autonomy:**

**High scorer:** Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressure to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards.

**Low scorer:** Is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways.

#### 4. **Environmental Mastery:**

**High scorer:** Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values.

**Low scorer:** Has difficulty managing everyday affairs; feels unable to change or improve surrounding context; is unaware of surrounding opportunities; lacks sense of control over external world.

#### 5. **Purpose in Life:**

**High scorer:** Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living.

**Low scorer:** Lacks a sense of meaning in life; has few goals or aims, lacks sense of direction; does not see purpose of past life; has no outlook or beliefs that give life meaning.

#### 6. **Personal Growth:**

**High scorer:** Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.

**Low scorer:** Has a sense of personal stagnation; lacks a sense of improvement or expansion over time; feels bored and uninterested with life feels unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors.

## Appendix B: Items for the Six Scales of Psychological Well-Being

**Autonomy**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Strongly Disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

1. Sometimes I change the way I act or think to be more like those around me. (-)
2. I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people. (+)
3. My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing. (+)
4. I tend to worry about what other people think of me. (-)
5. Being happy with myself is more important to me than having others approve of me. (+)
6. I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions. (-)
7. People rarely talk me into doing things I don't want to do. (+)
8. It is more important to me to "fit in" with others than to stand alone on my principles. (-)
9. I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus. (+)
10. It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters. (-)
11. I often change my mind about decisions if my friends or family disagree. (-)
12. I am not the kind of person who gives in to social pressure to think or act in certain ways. (+)
13. I am concerned about how other people evaluate the choices I have made in my life. (-)
14. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important. (+)

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items (1 = 6; 2 = 5; 3 = 4; 4 = 3; 5 = 2; 6 = 1)

**Environmental Mastery**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Strongly Disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

1. In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live. (+)
2. The demands of everyday life often get me down. (-)
3. I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me. (-)
4. I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my life. (+)
5. I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities. (-)
6. If I were unhappy with my living situation, I would take effective steps to change it. (+)
7. I generally do a good job of taking care of my personal finances and affairs. (+)
8. I find it stressful that I can't keep up with all of the things I have to do each day. (-)
9. I am good at juggling my time so that I can fit everything in that needs to get done. (+)
10. My daily life is busy, but I derive a sense of satisfaction from keeping up with everything. (+)
11. I get frustrated when trying to plan my daily activities because I never accomplish the things I set out to do. (-)
12. My efforts to find the kinds of activities and relationships that I need have been quite successful. (+)
13. I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.
14. I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking. (+)

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items (1 = 6; 2 = 5; 3 = 4; 4 = 3; 5 = 2; 6 = 1)

**Personal Growth**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
Disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

1. I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons. (-)
2. In general, I feel that I continue to learn more about myself as time goes by. (+)
3. I am the kind of person who likes to give new things a try. (+)
4. I don't want to try new ways of doing things – my life is fine the way it is. (-)
5. I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world. (+)
6. When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years. (-)
7. In my view, people of every age are able to continue growing and developing. (+)
8. With time, I have gained a lot of insight about life that has made me a stronger, more capable person. (+)
9. I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time. (+)
10. I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things. (-)
11. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth. (+)
12. I enjoy seeing how my views have changed and matured over the years. (+)
13. I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago. (-)
14. There is truth to the saying you can't teach an old dog new tricks. (-)

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items (1 = 6; 2 = 5; 3 = 4; 4 = 3; 5 = 2; 6 = 1)

**Positive Relations with Others**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
Disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

1. Most people see me as loving and affectionate. (+)
2. Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me. (-)
3. I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns. (-)
4. I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends. (+)
5. It is important to me to be a good listener when close friends talk to me about their problems. (+)
6. I don't have many people who want to listen when I need to talk. (-)
7. I feel like I get a lot out of my friendship. (+)
8. It seems to me that most other people have more friends than I do. (-)
9. People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others. (+)
10. I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others. (-)
11. I often feel like I'm on the outside looking in when it comes to friendships. (-)
12. I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me. (+)
13. I find it difficult to really open up when I talk with others. (-)
14. My friends and I sympathize with each other's problems.

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items (1 = 6; 2 = 5; 3 = 4; 4 = 3; 5 = 2; 6 = 1)

**Purpose in Life**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
Disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

1. I feel good when I think of what I've done in the past and what I hope to do in the future.

(+)

2. I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future. (-)

3. I tend to focus on the present, because the future nearly always brings me problems. (-)

4. I have a sense of direction and purpose in life. (+)

5. My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me. (-)

6. I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life. (-)

7. I used to set goals for myself, but that now seems like a waste of time. (-)

8. I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality. (+)

9. I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself. (+)

10. Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them. (+)

11. I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life. (-)

12. My aims in life have been more a source of satisfaction than frustration to me. (+)

13. I find it satisfying to think about what I have accomplished in life. (+)

14. In the final analysis, I'm not sure that my life adds up to much. (-)

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items (1 = 6; 2 = 5; 3 = 4; 4 = 3; 5 = 2; 6 = 1)



**Self-Acceptance**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Strongly Disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

1. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out. (+)
2. In general, I feel confident and positive about myself. (+)
3. I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have. (-)
4. Given the opportunity, there are many things about myself that I would change. (-)
5. I like most aspects of my personality. (+)
6. I made some mistakes in the past, but I feel that all in all everything has worked out for the best. (+)
7. In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life. (-)
8. For the most part, I am proud of who I am and the life I lead. (+)
9. I envy many people for the lives they lead. (-)
10. My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves. (-)
11. Many days I wake up feeling discouraged about how I have lived my life. (-)
12. The past had its ups and downs, but in general, I wouldn't want to change it. (+)
13. When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am. (+)
14. Everyone has their weaknesses, but I seem to have more than my share. (-)

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items (1 = 6; 2 = 5; 3 = 4; 4 = 3; 5 = 2; 6 = 1)

## Appendix C

**Table 1: Sex-Love Relationships**

<b>Sex-role socialization messages</b>	<b>Irrational beliefs<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Women's emotional and behavioral consequences<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Societal reactions (to role adherence and role violation)</b>
1. A woman without a man is unfulfilled.  2. Nice, sweet girls get husbands.  3. For women, work is nice, but love is better.  4. A women without children is like a tree without leaves.  5. Women without men are weird or pitiable.  6. Women's main job is to catch a man.  7. Bad kids come from bad mothers.	1. I must be loved and approved by significant others to be worthwhile. I am nothing without a man. I need someone stronger on whom to rely.  2. I must not act assertively in front of men. I must not put my desires first.  3. I must not take my work too seriously.  4. I am nothing without a child.  5. I must find a man, or people won't accept me, and I couldn't stand that.  6. As above.  7. If my children are screwed up (or my marriage falls apart) I'm no good, a failure.	Guilt  Anxiety, phobias  Low self-acceptance  Boredom  Depression  Lack of assertiveness  Trying to stay in a relationship at all costs (even if battered)  Not focusing on career advancement  Searching desperately for a mate  Failing to self-actualize  Psychosomatic illnesses	<i>If passive/submissive:</i> accepted but not valued.  <i>If assertive:</i> called "castrating," "nag," "shrew."  <i>If married:</i> homemaker role trivialized ("She's just a housewife.").  <i>If in dual-career marriage:</i> is expected to do majority of housework.  <i>If a mother:</i> accepted but not valued. Expected to be primary caretaker.  <i>If single:</i> stigmatized as "old maid."  <i>If divorced:</i> stigmatized; income goes down (while mate's goes up).  <i>If a lesbian:</i> considered perverted, a loser, a manhater.
<sup>a)</sup> The irrational beliefs column derives directly from the sex-role socialization column. <sup>b)</sup> Any of the emotional and behavior consequences and/or social reactions can result from the sex-role messages and the irrational beliefs in the first two columns.			
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<b>Table 2: Physical Image and Sexuality</b>			
<b>Sex-role socialization messages</b>	<b>Irrational beliefs<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Women's emotional and behavioral consequences<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Societal reactions (to role adherence and role violation)</b>
<p>1. Thin, young, beautiful women are valuable; others are not</p> <p>2. Nice women don't tell men what they want sexually.</p> <p>3. There are two kinds of women: sexy and motherly; the two don't go together.</p>	<p>1. If I'm not thin (young, beautiful), I'm disgusting. If I'm middle-aged, my life is essentially over. I must do everything to look beautiful (wear makeup, enlarge my breasts, decrease my thighs, shorten my hair, lengthen my legs!).</p> <p>2. I should look sexy but not act sexy, lest I make him feel inadequate.</p> <p>3. I should be sexy but not look sexy, lest he not marry me.</p>	<p>Anxiety and self-downing for even slight weight gain or other physical imperfections. Preoccupation with food. Eating disorders (85% of anorexics). Support billion-dollar cosmetic and weight reduction industry. Rage (at self or others). Terror of aging. Lack of sexual fulfillment; fear of rejection or "hurting" partner if assertive sexually.</p>	<p>Deification of thin, young, beautiful women. Older women at parties: invisible. Double standard for overweight women and men (women ridiculed). Sexually unresponsive women: considered "frigid" "uptight." Sexually assertive women considered "castrating"; "loose." Industries designed to sell women endless beauty products, diet pills, cosmetic surgery, books, etc.; appeal to their fears of aging and spreading. Media, religious, educational, medical messages often designed to maintain status quo.</p>
a) The irrational beliefs column derives directly from the sex-role socialization column.			

<b>Table 3: Work and Career</b>			
<b>Sex-role socialization messages</b>	<b>Irrational beliefs<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Women's emotional and behavioral consequences<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Societal reactions (to role adherence and role violation)</b>
1. Women are emotional.  2. Women are not good at mechanics, math, and management (the 3 "m's").  3. Women are responsible for making relationships work.  4. Be nice, be sweet; don't be too assertive.  5. Men need higher pay more than women.  6. A woman's "real work" and sources of happiness is in taking care of her home and family.  7. Successful women are "ball-breakers" or "sluts."	1. I really don't belong in a position of power (I'm an impostor).  2. I'll never learn to do math, so I mustn't even try.  3. I have to spend my time at work helping people to get along.  4. I shouldn't rock the boat or be too pushy.  5. I don't deserve more money.  6. I must have a sex-love relationship to be happy; work is only temporary; I must not be too involved.  7. I have to be careful not to disturb anyone as I try to move ahead. I can't really show them what I know.	Lower aspirations; less risk-taking and assertiveness. Fear of failure <i>and</i> success. Avoidance of tasks leading to job advancement (public speaking, generating new ideas). Nonassertiveness in seeking promotions, salary increases. Trying to fit existing structure. Developmental lags in agentic functioning (autonomy; skill mastery). If successful: anxiety about lesser change of mating; sense of being an "impostor." If mated, fear of (and guilt about) losing partner's love. If a parent, guilt over "abandoning" children.	Discrimination in promotions, salaries. Women concentrated in lowest occupational groups, so aspiring women have few role models or access to people in power. Salary differentials for men and women of equal training, experience, and rank (least \$ to single mothers). Assertive women in management positions considered "castrating," "dykes," "not real women," or have "slept their weigh to the top." Working mothers especially discriminated against on the job, then blamed for being "bad mothers" or "bad workers." Sexual harassment. Gender isolation. Little institutional support (day care, help at home from spouse).
a) The irrational beliefs column derives directly from the sex-role socialization column. b) Any of the emotional and behavior consequences and/or social reactions can result from the sex-role messages and the irrational beliefs in the first two columns.			

**Table 4: Victimization and Self-Sacrifice**

<b>Sex-role socialization messages</b>	<b>Irrational beliefs<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Women's emotional and behavioral consequences<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Societal reactions (to role adherence and role violation)</b>
1. Women's role is to please men sexually. 2. Nice women take care of men. 3. It's a woman's fault if the man is unhappy or the relationship fails. 4. A woman without a man is worthless. 5. Women's needs come last. 6. Men lead; women follow. 7. Women put up or shut up. 8. Women expect to be pushed around. 9. Women who open their mouths can expect to get them shut.	1. I must give him what he wants sexually. 2. I must satisfy his wishes. 3. If he's displeased, I'm bad, a failure. 4. I'm nothing without a man (i.e., incapable of coping, being fulfilled, or being happy). 5. I must not take care of myself until everyone else is taken care of. 6. I must accept the man's decisions. 7. I must not argue or dispute the man's wishes or commands. 8. It's my job to bear the burdens of womanhood in silence. 9. It's too dangerous to take a risk.	Anxiety about being alone, resulting in bad mating choices. Staying in abusive relationships. Saying yes to unwanted sex. Enduring abusive treatment in workplace and/or home. Depression about helplessness. Shame about not taking risks. Fear of asserting desires. Harboring unresolved anger.	Rape, incest, sexual molestation, and harassment. Blaming women for messy house, noisy children, bad sex. Physical and psychological battering (one woman battered every 15 seconds). 37-40% of women have experienced sexual or physical abuse before age 21. 71% of women have had a significant instance of sexual harassment on the job. Portrayal of women as willing victims in media. Portrayal of women who do not accept victimization as dangerous "troublemakers." Lack of avenues for redress of women's grievances.
a) The irrational beliefs column derives directly from the sex-role socialization column. b) Any of the emotional and behavior consequences and/or social reactions can result from the sex-role messages and the irrational beliefs in the first two columns.			
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## Appendix D

## Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Below are a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale below:

0	1	2	3	4	5
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree
strongly	somewhat	slightly	slightly	somewhat	strongly

- \_B(I)\_ 1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
- \_H\_ 2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
- \_B(P)\*\_ 3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.
- \_H\_ 4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
- \_H\_ 5. Women are too easily offended.
- \_B(I)\*\_ 6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
- \_H\*\_ 7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
- \_B(G)\_ 8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
- \_B(P)\_ 9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
- \_H\_ 10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
- \_H\_ 11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
- \_B(I)\_ 12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
- \_B(I)\*\_ 13. Men are complete without women.
- \_H\_ 14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

- \_H\_\_\_\_\_ 15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
- \_H\_\_\_\_\_ 16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
- \_B(P)\_\_\_\_\_ 17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
- \_H\*\_\_\_\_\_ 18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
- \_B(G)\_\_\_\_\_ 19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
- \_B(P)\_\_\_\_\_ 20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
- \_H\*\_\_\_\_\_ 21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.
- \_B(G)\_\_\_\_\_ 22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

**Note:** H = Hostile Sexism, B = Benevolent Sexism, (P) = Protective Paternalism, (G) =

Complementary Gender Differentiation, (I) = Heterosexual Intimacy, \* = reversed item.

### Scoring Instructions

The ASI may be used as an overall measure of sexism, with hostile and benevolent components equally weighted, by simply averaging the score for all items after reversing the items listed below. The two ASI subscales (Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism) may also be calculated separately. For correlational research, purer measures of HS and BS can be obtained by using partial correlations (so that the effects of the correlation between the scales is removed.)

Reverse the following items (0 = 5, 1 = 4, 2 = 3, 3 = 2, 4 = 1, 5 = 0): 3, 6, 7, 13, 18, 21.

Hostile Sexism Score = average of the following items: 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21.

Benevolent Sexism Score = average of the following items: 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22.

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## Appendix E

## Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS)

## Sample Items

**Self--Oriented Perfectionism**

It makes me uneasy to see an error in my work.

One of my goals is to be perfect in everything I do.

I never aim for perfection in my work (reverse--□keyed).

I must work to my full potential at all times.

I must always be successful at school or work.

**Other--Oriented Perfectionism**

I have high expectations for the people who are important to me.

I do not have very high standards for those around me. (reverse--□keyed)

If I ask someone to do something, I expect it to be done flawlessly.

I can't be bothered with people who won't strive to better themselves.

The people who matter to me should never let me down.

**Socially--Prescribed Perfectionism**

The better I do, the better I am expected to do.

My family expects me to be perfect.

Those around me readily accept that I can make mistakes too. (reverse--□keyed)

The people around me expect me to succeed at everything I do.

Anything that I do that is less than excellent will be seen as poor work by those around me.



## Appendix F

## Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate how often you feel each statement below is true or untrue *of you*. For each item, write the appropriate number (1 to 7) on the line to the left of the statement, using the following key:

Almost Always Untrue	Usually Untrue	More Often Untrue Than True	Equally Often True And Untrue	More Often True Than Untrue	Usually True	Almost Always True
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When someone compliments me for something, I care more about how it makes me feel about myself than about what it tells me about my strengths or abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I feel worthwhile even if I am not successful in meeting certain goals that are important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When I receive negative feedback, I take it as an opportunity to improve my behavior or performance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I feel that some people have more value than others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Making a big mistake may be disappointing, but it doesn't change how I feel about myself overall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sometimes I find myself thinking about whether I am a good or bad person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. To feel like a worthwhile person, I must be loved by the people who are important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. When I am deciding on goals for myself, trying to gain happiness is more important than trying to prove myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I think that being good at many things makes someone a good person overall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. My sense of self-worth depends a lot on how I compare with other people.

- \_\_\_\_\_11. I believe that I am worthwhile simply because I am a human being.12. When I receive negative feedback, I often find it hard to be open to what the person is saying about me.
- \_\_\_\_\_13. I set goals for myself that I hope will prove my worth.
- \_\_\_\_\_14. Being bad at certain things makes me value myself less.
- \_\_\_\_\_15. I think that people who are successful in what they do are especially worthwhile people.
- \_\_\_\_\_16. To me, praise is more important for pointing out to me what I'm good at than for making me feel valuable as a person
- \_\_\_\_\_17. I feel I am a valuable person even when other people disapprove of me.
- \_\_\_\_\_18. I avoid comparing myself to others to decide if I am a worthwhile person.
- \_\_\_\_\_19. When I am criticized or when I fail at something, I feel worse about myself as a person.
- \_\_\_\_\_20. I don't think it's a good idea to judge my worth as a person.

Appendix G

Imposter Phenomenon Scale

It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
(Not At All True) (Rarely)      (Sometimes)      (Often)      (Very True)

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I took the task.	
2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.	
3. I avoid evaluations if possible and I have a dread of others evaluating me.	
4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.	
5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.	
6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.	
7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.	
8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it.	
9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.	
10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or	

accomplishments.	
11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck.	
12. I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.	
13. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.	
14. I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt.	
15. When I've succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.	
16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I have done.	
17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.	
18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or on an examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.	

## Appendix H

## Extended Version of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire

**Instructions:** The items below consist of a pair of contradictory characteristics – that is, you cannot be both at the same time. The numbers form a scale between the two extremes. You are to circle the number that describes where you fall on the scale.

not at all arrogant	1	2	3	4	5	very arrogant
not at all independent	1	2	3	4	5	very independent
not at all emotional	1	2	3	4	5	very emotional
looks out for self	1	2	3	4	5	looks out for others
very passive	1	2	3	4	5	very active
not at all egotistical	1	2	3	4	5	very egotistical
difficult to devote self completely to others	1	2	3	4	5	easy to devote self completely to others
very rough	1	2	3	4	5	very gentle
not at all helpful to others	1	2	3	4	5	very helpful to others
not at all boastful	1	2	3	4	5	very boastful
not at all competitive	1	2	3	4	5	very competitive
not at all kind	1	2	3	4	5	very kind
not at all aware of others' feelings	1	2	3	4	5	very aware of others' feelings
can make decisions easily	1	2	3	4	5	has difficulty making decisions
not at all greedy	1	2	3	4	5	very greedy
gives up easily	1	2	3	4	5	never gives up

not at all self-confident	1	2	3	4	5	very self-confident
feels very inferior	1	2	3	4	5	feels very superior
not at all dictatorial	1	2	3	4	5	very dictatorial
not at all understanding of others	1	2	3	4	5	very understanding of others
not at all cynical	1	2	3	4	5	very cynical
very cold in relations with others	1	2	3	4	5	very warm in relations with others
not at all hostile	1	2	3	4	5	very hostile
goes to pieces under pressure	1	2	3	4	5	stands up well under pressure

These items are taken from Spence et al.'s (1979) Extended Version of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire.

Spence, J. T., Helmreich, R. L., & Holahan, C.K. (1979) Negative and positive components of psychological masculinity and femininity and their relationships to self-reports of neurotic and acting out behaviors. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1673-1682.